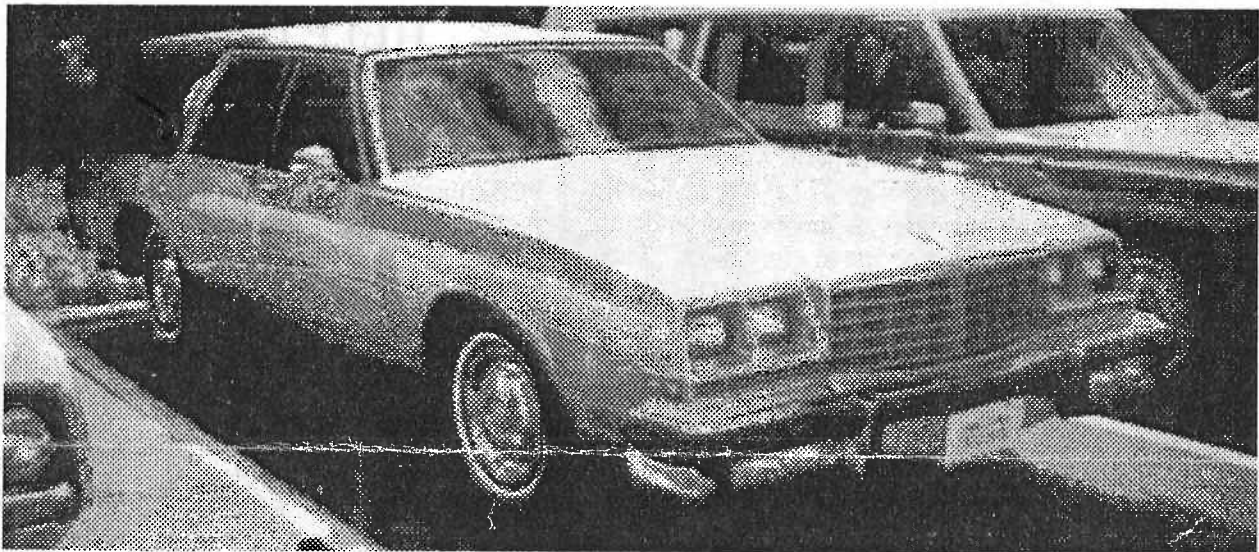




The Criterion

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHEAST CHAPTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY
FIRST QUARTER 1999 GREGG D. MERKSAMER, EDITOR

LOOKING TOWARDS PCS LANCASTER '99: Schedule Takes Shape At Northeast Chapter's Autumn Meetings



Andy Toton brought his latest procar purchase to October's meeting in Stirling, a 1981 Buick LeSabre Estate Wagon "first call" car with just 36,000 original miles. Fitted with five color-coded body bags (not for a single trip, presumably), this dealer-converted vehicle was recently decommissioned by the same Philadelphia area funeral home that sold Andy his 1978 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Landau hearse.

Preparations for our hosting the Professional Car

Society's 23rd Annual International Meet in Lancaster, PA next August 17th-21st remained the #1 topic when the Northeast Chapter met at Stirling, NJ on October 11th and at Wood Ridge, NJ on December 6th (both meetings attracted 17 people, almost one-third of the total chapter member count, while December's gathering also witnessed the re-election of all chapter officers for 1999. *The Criterion's* congratulations go out to returning president Leo Maren, vice-president and activities director Bill Marcy, secretary Mary Hookway and treasurer Dottie Forvour).

Even though no one can underestimate how much the hosting of a PCS International Meet will test our energy and enthusiasm, words of encouragement were offered in a recent letter to the Chapter from PCS President Gene Dybinski, who described his efforts for

TIME TO RENEW!

As active members are the life blood of any car enthusiast organization (as are up-to-date addresses and phone numbers for the mailing list), all our readers should make sure to fill out the 1999 renewal form at the back of this issue, write a \$10 check payable to the Northeast Chapter - Professional Car Society and mail it to membership director Dottie Forvour's address by February 15th. Thanks!

the 1998 PCS International in Chicago as "the greatest spare time project I ever dreamed of and I had a ball doing it." Even though Gene had only his mother Shirley and a few other volunteers to assist him, Northeast Chapter V.P. Bill Marcy said that "Gene obviously enjoyed himself even though he had a lot on his mind. He just did it and those of you who went to Chicago know how successful he was."

As this will be the first time that the PCS Northeast Chapter has hosted an International Meet since Lambertville, NJ in 1987, the excitement was palpable as the itinerary for PCS Lancaster '99 was more or less finalized at the meetings at Stirling and Wood Ridge. Meet headquarters will be the Best Western Eden Inn Resort, located at the intersection of U.S. 30 and PA state highway 272 (Oregon Pike), which offers such amenities as indoor and outdoor swimming pools and a refrigerator in every room. "The parking lot we'll be using on the West side of the hotel has a 210 space capacity," noted meet registrar Andy Toton (who, along with his wife Karen, bring to bear several years of experience with the Cadillac-LaSalle Club's gigantic Grand National Meets), "and it's one of the best I've ever seen in terms of security." In order to take advantage of the special group rate of \$90 plus tax, prospective attendees are encouraged to make reservations at the earliest possible date by calling the hotel directly at (717) 569-6444.

While the Pennsylvania Dutch Country's tourist diversions will no doubt encourage many PCS people to arrive the preceding weekend, the meet's official itinerary commences on the morning of Tuesday, August 17th with an "early bird" tour of the Swab ambulance plant that's located about fifty miles

northwest of Lancaster in Elizabethtown, PA. Wednesday will see the PCS bus down westbound US 30 to take in the world-famous Harley Davidson motorcycle factory in York; thanks to Paul Vickery's excellent suggestion at the December meeting, this may be followed by a visit to the Quigley Motor Company, a world-renowned manufacturer of four-wheel drive vans and right hand drive conversions based in nearby Manchester, PA.

HELP US PLAN PCS LANCASTER '99!

In order to finalize details on next summer's PCS International Meet, Northeast Chapter President Leo Maren has finalized a once-a-month schedule of Sunday meetings at the Long Hill First Aid Squad HQ in Stirling, NJ (if you need directions call Leo at 908-647-3738 or E-mail him at caddy@bellatlantic.net). Please mark your calendars and join us there at noon on February 14th, March 14th, April 11th, May 2nd, June 13th and July 11th.

Thursday's activities will take place in Hershey, PA, universally savored as "Chocolate Town U.S.A." and home to the world-renowned library and archives of the Antique Automobile Club of America, and will conclude with a traditionally hearty Pennsylvania Dutch dinner at the Hershey Farm in Lancaster. Friday morning will find the PCS in scenic Strasburg, PA, where their cars will be on display outside the Railroad Museum as their owners take an old-time stream train ride, marvel at the models in the Toy Railroad Museum or grab a meal at the Caboose Motel restaurant. Next stop is the famous farmer's market in Bird-in-Hand, where meet attendees will be able to take an horsedrawn Amish buggy ride or a free tour of the Anderson Pretzel factory.

Saturday, August 21st is the official show day at the Best Western Eden Inn, which will give PCS members the opportunity to examine rare funeral cars, limousines and automobile-chassied ambulances from all over the United States and Canada. Squeamish Lancaster locals need not shy away, either, since the

ADJUSTING OUR BOOKMARKS

Our more detail-focused readers may have noticed by now that we have dispensed with the "Fourth Quarter 1998" issue of *The Criterion*. While you can still expect to receive four issues of your Chapter's newsletter this year, the fact that we will devote so much space in the coming months to this August's activities in Lancaster made this an especially appropriate time at which to revise the way in which they're dated.

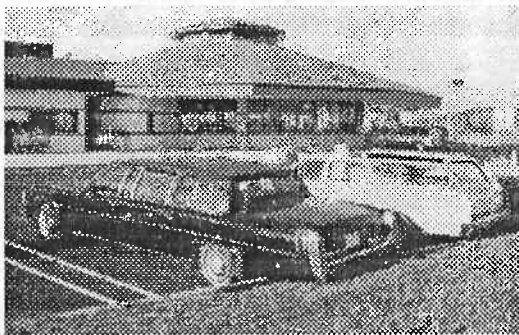
organizers will continue to enforce the Society's strict ban against displaying caskets, skeletons and other morbid miscellany in the vehicles on the show field (for safety's sake, all participants are also required to have at least a 2.5-pound fire extinguisher on hand). For added diversion a "shopping shuttle" will be available on show day for those who need to exercise their spending power.

Epitomizing the increased interest that the PCS is currently enjoying in larger car club circles, Cadillac-LaSalle Club national president Richard Sills has agreed to be the speaker at Saturday evening's awards banquet. Having known this Washington D.C.-based attorney-by-trade for twelve years, Andy Toton asserts

that Richard "knows many people in high places in the automotive field and has a photographic memory with regards to anything he's read. Whether you have a new car or an old car, he can tell you the paint code," and fellow CLC veteran Craig Stewart adds that "Richard's a real nice guy who can let his hair down" during a speech. Following the presentation of trophies in such categories as Funeral Director's Choice, Medic's Choice and Best-of-Show, PCS Lancaster '99 will conclude in the traditional fashion with a sky-piercing "sound and light show" by the ambulances' sirens and emergency beacons.

Registration packages for PCS Lancaster '99 will soon be available from Northeast Chapter President Leo Maren, who can be reached by phoning (908) 647-3738, E-mailing caddy@bellatlantic.net or by writing him at 369 Chestnut Street, Stirling, New Jersey 07601. In addition to volunteers for various meet-related projects, the Chapter is also interested in securing trophy sponsors and other contributors of time and material. During the December meeting in Wood Ridge, Bob Behr announced a \$50 donation towards expenses by Ken Becker of Secure America, a Pottstown, PA-based specialist in security systems and OSHA compliance equipment.

HEY, CARHOP!



Though just two professional cars were on display, Bill Marcy described the November 15th Chapter meet at Sonny's Drive-In in Augusta, NJ as "a nice day and a nice ride." In addition to Bill and Lucille's 1964 Olds Amblewagon, Gregg and Lisa Merksamer's armor-plated 1984 Cadillac Formal Limousine by Protective Materials made its PCS event debut. Even though he's "still shopping for a procar, something garageable," Craig Wexelblatt and his wife also drove out from Stroudsburg, PA to attend. Located at the junction of US highway 206 and NJ 15 in the northwest corner of the state, Sonny's good, cheap food and "car crazy" atmosphere (besides a continually rotated collection of custom 1950s cars in the center of the dining area, local enthusiasts graced the parking lot with three 1960s Corvettes, a 1958 Oldsmobile and a rare, mint-condition 1970 VW Camper) certainly warrant a return visit by the PCS.

THE EDITOR'S TWO CENTS

In recent months the fast-growing Southern California Chapter of the PCS has found itself embroiled in controversy as the result of opinions expressed in its publication *The California Collector* and on the PCS Web Site's virtual bulletin board. Basically, SoCal Chapter President Lou Farah and his chief lieutenant Jim Crabtree have been wondering whether the PCS might attract more members on the national level if it relaxed its long-time restrictions against the display of caskets and modified vehicles on the show field, especially from organizations like the Grimriders that have no objection to such trappings. "The suggestions that you read from us are basically the steps we took to make the Southern California Chapter successful," Farah explained in a New Year's Eve posting to the PCS message board in response to the often-angry criticism his ideas have received. "If we could grow as fast as we did in three years, is there anything wrong with taking a few of these suggestions

and applying them to the national?"

Considering that a much greater proportion of funerals conclude with cremations on the west coast and the discomfort level generated by a fully loaded hearse is accordingly lower, I was personally not surprised to see SoCal emerge as the first PCS chapter to energetically question the "no casket" rule. While I don't agree with their position for reasons I will soon discuss, I do believe Lou and Jim have earned the right to forward such radical proposals in light of their chapter's pioneering contributions to the PCS with regards to our presence on the Internet and co-sponsored events like their novel and highly successful tie-in to the *Emergency!* TV series convention in Burbank. Many of their recent suggestions, including

proposals that the frequency of national-level PCS communication be increased and that new members be automatically referred to a regional chapter, are most worthy of examination and eventual implementation.

Lou's New Year's Eve posting on the PCS Web site also wondered if "jealousy" was the reason why "many of you don't like us." Judging from the conversations I have had regarding this controversy, I want to reassure him that the biggest beef other PCS members have with the SoCal Chapter is that they sent a large, enthusiastic delegation to this year's International Meet in Chicago, got us all very excited about the idea of a 2001 International Meet on the west coast, and then failed to mention their misgivings about the PCS' most fundamental policies at the very same meeting. While it is unlikely to (and in my opinion should not) derail their bid to host the 2001 International, keeping these opinions to themselves until they could be aired without face-to-face discussion in *The California Collector* or on the Internet simply struck many of us as undiplomatic.

But this is all secondary to main issue. Having reflected upon my experiences conveying the PCS' ideals to the "outside world" in my capacity as National Publicity Chairman, I fervently believe that the "no casket" rule, by keeping people focused on the style and workmanship of our rare, virtually custom-built vehicles, is one of the cornerstones of our success and the main reason why funerary vehicles are more readily accepted at car meets, cruises and shows. As Ohio-based PCS veteran Bernie DeWinter put it so successfully in his January 8th contribution to the Internet debate, before the PCS was founded in 1976 "the general impression of anyone who owned an old hearse was that they had to be some kind of ghoul. PCS made it possible for people to be accepted as normal if they owned a hearse, and gave them a measure of respectability. All the while, it did more to encourage the historical aspect of the cars. This was done because professional cars were always the most overlooked aspect of automotive history. Considering what PCS was formed for, it's done a mighty DAMN good job." The only thought I would care to add is that, since the Grimriders and Phantom Coaches-type groups are strongest on the west coast anyway, the PCS cannot possibly prosper in the long term by compromising the high standards of originality and

FUN CITY UPDATE

When Mayor Rudy Giuliani recently declared war on New York City's strip clubs (along with sidewalk hot dog vendors, jaywalking and several other things that give The Big Apple its unique, er, character) one particularly creative entrepreneur literally took the issue into the streets. reports an article by Maura Egan in the January 4th issue of *New York* magazine.

For \$400 a hour, those searching for adult entertainment can call Centerfolds-To-Go and hire a chauffeur-chaperoned stretch limousine with its own private stripper (if you have a bachelor party in mind, \$1,000 an hour gets you three exotic dancers). Having seen his business grow more than 40% in recent months, owner Chris Kellund told *New York* that his concept is particularly popular with time-challenged, anonymity-seeking executives on their way to the airport. "With our service they can order a car, get picked up right in front of the office - and no one knows." Since Kellund's superstretches aren't public venues, his enterprise isn't hamstrung by the myriad regulations and street corner protests that other strip clubs are subject to.

